

## 7. *Parents' Perceptions of Students' School, Teachers, and School Programs* *By Phyllis Levine and Mary Wagner*

---

---

The previous two chapters describe several aspects of the schools, school programs, and services of students with disabilities, with a focus on the changes students have experienced between Waves 1 and 2 of SEELS. What do parents think of those schools and school programs? Have the changes described in previous chapters been associated with changes in parents' perceptions of their children's schools, teachers, and school programs, including their special education program and services?

This chapter describes changes in parents' perceptions of several aspects of their children's school experiences by using data from parent interviews conducted in 2000 and 2002. Parents' perceptions are measured in two ways. Parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with aspects of their children's school and school programs using a 4-point scale; parents reported whether they were "very satisfied," "somewhat satisfied," "somewhat dissatisfied," or "very dissatisfied." They reported their satisfaction with their children's school, teachers, overall education, and special education services as well as with two more specific issues regarding the homework their children receive and schools informing them of their children's academic performance. In addition, parents were asked to state their level of agreement with a variety of statements about their children's school and teachers. Levels of agreement are "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree."

Findings are reported for Waves 1 and 2 for students with disabilities as a whole and for those who differ in their primary disability classification and selected demographic characteristics, when significant.

### **Parents' Perceptions of Their Children's School**

---

---

In interviews, parents reported their overall level of satisfaction with "the school (CHILD) attended this year." They also were asked to report their level of agreement with three statements about their children's school:

- The school is good at meeting my child's individual needs.
- The principal and assistant principal maintain good discipline at my child's school
- In school, most students and teachers respect each other.

Parents report less favorable perceptions of their children's school in Wave 2 than in Wave 1 (Exhibit 7-1).

**Exhibit 7-1**  
**Changes in Parents’ Perceptions of the Schools Attended by**  
**Students with Disabilities**

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Percentage- Point Change
Percentage with parents reporting satisfaction with:			
Child’s school			
Very satisfied	52.8	38.1	-14.7***
Somewhat satisfied	33.1	37.7	+4.3 *
Somewhat or very dissatisfied	14.1	24.2	+10.1***
How well school keeps me informed of my child’s behavior and academic performance			
Very satisfied	65.2	48.0	-17.2***
Somewhat satisfied	23.4	33.1	+9.7***
Somewhat or very dissatisfied	11.5	18.9	+7.4***
Percentage with parents reporting agreement that:			
The school is good at meeting my child’s individual needs			
Strongly agree	35.9	31.2	-4.7*
Agree	48.4	54.3	+5.9**
Disagree or strongly disagree	15.7	14.4	
The principal and assistant principal maintain good discipline at my child’s school.			
Strongly agree	45.5	37.1	-8.4***
Agree	48.1	56.5	+8.4***
Disagree or strongly disagree	6.4	6.4	
In school, most students and teachers respect each other			
Strongly agree	39.4	32.3	-7.1***
Agree	52.2	59.1	+6.9**
Disagree or strongly disagree	8.4	8.6	

Source: SEELS parent interviews, Waves 1 and 2.

Statistically significant difference in a two-tailed test at the following levels:

\*p<.05, \*\*p<>01, \*\*\*p<.001.

- In Wave 1, about half of parents (53%) reported being “very satisfied” with the school their child attended. In Wave 2, 38% of parents feel this way, a decrease of 15 percentage points. At the same time, the proportions of parents who rate their satisfaction with the schools as “somewhat or very

dissatisfied” rose 10 percentage points, from 14% in Wave 1 to 24% in Wave 2.

- A 17-percentage-point decline is evident in parents being “very satisfied” with how well schools inform them of their children’s behavior and academic performance. There are accompanying increases of 10 and 7 percentage points in parents being “satisfied” and “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with how well schools inform them.
- Smaller declines in positive parental perceptions are indicated in the degree to which they “strongly agree” with three statements about their children’s school.
- There are declines of 5 to 8 percentage points in parents strongly agreeing the school meets their children’s individual needs and there is good discipline and mutual respect between teachers and students at school. Increases of similar size are evident in parents reporting they “agree” with the statements.
- Despite declines in strong positive perceptions, few parents report dissatisfaction with their children’s school or disagreement with positive statements about them.

## **Parents’ Perceptions of Their Children’s School Programs and Services**

---

Parents were asked to report their overall level of satisfaction with “the education services or programs (CHILD) has received this year” and for students who continued to receive special education services, parents were asked their level of satisfaction with “the special education services (CHILD) receives.”

Similar to their perceptions of their children’s school overall, parents report less favorable perceptions over time regarding their children’s education in general and special education services in particular (Exhibit 7-2).

**Exhibit 7-2**  
**Changes in Parents’ Perceptions of the General and Special Education Programs of Students with Disabilities**

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Percentage-Point Change
<b>Percentage with parents reporting satisfaction with:</b>			
Children’s education services or program			
Very satisfied	55.2	33.9	-21.3***
Somewhat satisfied	35.6	50.3	+14.7***
Somewhat or very dissatisfied	9.1	15.8	+5.4***
Children’s special education services			
Very satisfied	60.9	46.1	-14.8***
Somewhat satisfied	26.6	34.8	+7.4***
Somewhat or very dissatisfied	12.5	19.9	+7.4***

Source: SEELS parent interviews, Waves 1 and 2.

Statistically significant difference in a two-tailed test at the following levels:

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

- There has been a fairly steep 21-percentage-point drop in the percentage of students with disabilities whose parents report being “very satisfied” with the overall education program and services (55% vs. 34%). Most of this change is offset by an increase in parents being “somewhat satisfied” (15 percentage points), but the percentage of students whose parents express dissatisfaction has increased by 5 percentage points.
- There has been a somewhat smaller decrease in likelihood that parents report being “very satisfied” with their children’s special education services (15 percentage, points from 61% to 46%). There has been a corresponding increase of 7 percentage points in students with disabilities having parents who report being “somewhat” or “very dissatisfied” (12% vs. 20%).
- It is important to note that despite parents’ perceptions being less positive in Wave 2, a minority of students have parents who report dissatisfaction with children’s overall school program (16%) or with their special education services (20%).

**Parents’ Perceptions of Their Children’s Teachers**

Parents were asked to report their overall level of satisfaction with “the teachers (CHILD) has had this year” and with “the amount and difficulty of homework” assigned by teachers. They also were asked to report their level of agreement with the statement “teachers maintain good discipline in the classroom.”

The pattern of decreased levels of positive perceptions from Wave 1 to Wave 2 is apparent in parent’s views of their children’s teachers and their homework practices (Exhibit 7-3).

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Percentage- Point Change
Percentage with parents reporting satisfaction with:			
Child’s teachers			
Very satisfied	64.1	44.5	-19.6***
Somewhat satisfied	25.3	39.2	+13.9***
Somewhat or very dissatisfied	10.5	16.3	+5.8***
The amount and difficulty of homework assigned by teachers			
Very satisfied	41.4	23.0	-18.4***
Somewhat satisfied	40.2	53.3	+13.1***
Somewhat or very dissatisfied	18.3	23.7	+5.4**
Percentage with parents reporting agreement that teachers maintain good discipline in the classroom			
Strongly agree	40.9	34.4	-6.5**
Agree	51.2	56.2	+5.0*
Disagree or strongly disagree	7.9	9.4	

Source: SEELS parent interviews, Waves 1 and 2.  
 Statistically significant difference in a two-tailed test at the following levels:  
 \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

- Whereas almost two-thirds of students had parents who were “very satisfied” with their children’s teachers in Wave 1, 44% of students have parents who report this high level of satisfaction in Wave 2, a decline of 20 percentage points.
- In Wave 2, the proportion of students with parents who voice dissatisfaction with teachers increased over Wave 1 (16% vs. 10%).
- Changes in satisfaction with the homework teachers assign mirror those with teachers in general. An 18-percentage-point decline in students having parents who report being “very satisfied” with the amount and difficulty of children’s homework is accompanied by a 13-percentage-point increase in parents being “somewhat satisfied” and a 5-percentage-point increase in reports of dissatisfaction.

- A decline of 6 percentage points in students with parents who report they “strongly agree” that teachers keep good discipline in the classroom is accompanied by a 5-percentage-point increase in reports of agreement.
- Despite declines in strong positive perceptions of teachers, the large majority of students with disabilities have parents who are at least somewhat satisfied with teachers and in general agreement that they maintain order in the classroom.

## **Differential Changes in Parents’ Perceptions across Disability Categories**

---

### **Perceptions of Students’ School**

Changes in parents’ perceptions of their children’s school were fairly widespread across disability categories (Exhibit 7-4).

- The patterns of declining parent satisfaction with the schools students with disabilities attend and with how well schools keep parents informed about students’ behavior and academic performance are noted among students in virtually all disability categories. Only students with traumatic brain injuries do not have parents who are significantly less likely to be “very satisfied” with their schools.
- Declines in parents being “very satisfied” with their children’s school range from 8 percentage points among students with other health impairments to 18 percentage points among students with emotional disturbances or orthopedic impairments.
- Declines in high levels of satisfaction with how well schools provide information about their children are larger, ranging from 11 percentage points for students with autism to 23 percentage points among students with speech impairments.
- Declines in strong agreement that schools meet students’ individual needs are of similar size and are similarly widespread. They range from a 9-percentage-point decline in strong agreement among parents of students with autism to a 20-percentage point decline among parents of students with orthopedic impairments.
- Students in fewer categories have parents who report lower levels of strong agreement that good discipline is maintained at school and that there generally is mutual respect among teachers and students at school (three and four disability categories, respectively). Declines range from 10 to 15 percentage points across the two factors.
- Declines in positive perceptions of children’s school are least apparent among parents of children with autism; a decline is noted only in high satisfaction with schools keeping parents well informed. In contrast, all

aspects of positive perceptions of schools decline among parents of students with speech or orthopedic impairments.

**Exhibit 7-4**  
**Changes in Parents' Satisfaction with Children's School, by Disability Category**

	Learning Disability	Speech/ Language Impair- ment	Mental Retar- dation	Emotional Distur- bance	Hearing Impair- ment	Visual Impair- ment	Ortho- pedic Impair- ment	Other Health Impair- ment	Autism	Traumati- c Brain Injury	Multiple Disabili- ties
Percentage whose parents are "very satisfied" with:											
Child's school											
Wave 1	49.4	60.5	51.6	43.3	53.5	57.3	54.3	43.9	47.9	46.2	50.7
Wave 2	35.9	44.1	36.9	25.6	42.7	45.1	36.0	30.8	39.6	34.3	37.6
Percentage-point change	-13.5***	-16.4***	-14.7***	-17.7***	-10.8**	-12.2*	-18.3***	-13.1***	-8.3*		-13.1*
How well school informs parents of student's behavior and academic performance											
Wave 1	60.8	71.1	68.6	61.6	66.8	67.0	67.6	57.7	60.9	65.2	72.6
Wave 2	46.8	48.4	54.8	43.7	55.0	52.3	50.6	42.1	50.0	49.2	54.5
Percentage-point change	-14.0***	-22.7***	-13.8***	-17.9***	-11.8**	-14.7**	-17.0***	-15.6***	-10.9* <sup>1</sup>	-16.0*	-18.1***
Percentage whose parents "strongly agree" that:											
The school meets student's individual needs											
Wave 1	58.0	68.2	61.4	51.6	64.8	66.2	58.5	55.1	48.5	52.1	57.6
Wave 2	45.1	56.2	42.3	33.2	48.1	54.1	38.3	42.0	39.5	39.1	38.9
Percentage-point change	-12.9**	-12.0*	-19.1***	-18.4***	-16.7***	-18.1*	-20.2***	-13.1***	-9.0*		-18.7***
Good discipline is maintained at school											
Wave 1	43.8	49.4	42.2	39.6	48.4	50.3	51.3	45.8	44.8	37.8	44.1
Wave 2	36.6	38.8	37.5	28.9	43.2	40.7	42.9	33.3	39.9	37.8	38.4
Percentage-point change		-10.6**		-10.7**				-12.5**			
Most students and teachers respect each other											
Wave 1	34.4	46.3	37.7	30.3	43.9	46.9	47.9	44.3	41.7	31.8	41.5
Wave 2	30.8	35.0	32.2	23.7	38.8	36.7	37.4	29.3	39.4	36.4	37.4
Percentage-point change		-11.3**				-10.2*	-10.5*	-15.0***			

Source: SEELS parent interviews, Waves 1 and 2.

Statistically significant difference in a two-tailed test at the following levels: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

- In Wave 2, parents of students with emotional disturbances have among the lowest levels of positive perceptions across the indicators included in Exhibit 7-4. Positive perceptions are among the highest for parents of students with visual or hearing impairments.

### Perceptions of Students’ School Programs

Widespread declines in strong positive perceptions of students school programs and services are apparent for parents of students in most disability categories (Exhibit 7-5).

- Declines in parents being “very satisfied” with students’ overall school programs and services range from 15 to 24 percentage points across eleven of the disability categories.
- Declines of 9 to 20 percentage points are evident in parents reporting they are “very satisfied” with children’s special education services.
- Positive perceptions in Wave 2 are most evident for parents of students with speech, hearing, or visual impairments and least apparent among parents of students with emotional disturbances.

**Exhibit 7-5**  
**Changes in Parents’ Satisfaction with Children’s School Programs and Services, by Disability Category**

	Learning Disability	Speech/ Language Impairment	Mental Retardation	Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Visual Impairment	Orthopedic Impairment	Other Health Impairment	Autism	Traumatic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabilities
Percentage whose parents report being “very satisfied” with child’s:											
Education program and services											
Wave 1	51.9	63.6	51.4	45.0	54.6	57.8	53.4	50.5	49.3	51.3	56.5
Wave 2	32.5	39.1	35.9	22.4	39.3	42.7	37.4	29.6	34.2	35.0	33.4
Percentage-point change	-19.4***	-24.5***	-15.5***	-22.6***	-15.3***	-15.1**	-16.0***	-20.9***	-15.1***		-23.1***
Special education services											
Wave 1	58.0	68.2	61.4	51.6	64.8	66.2	58.5	55.1	48.5	52.1	57.6
Wave 2	45.1	56.2	42.3	33.2	48.1	54.1	38.3	42.0	39.5	39.1	38.9
Percentage-point change	-12.9**	-12.0*	-19.1***	-18.4***	-16.7***	-18.1*	-20.2***	-13.1***	-9.0*		-18.7***

Source: SEELS parent interviews, Waves 1 and 2.

Statistically significant difference in a two-tailed test at the following levels: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.



## **Perceptions of Students' Teachers**

Widespread declines in strong positive perceptions of students' teachers and their homework practices mirror those regarding students' schools and school programs and services (Exhibit 7-6).

- Declines in parents reporting they are “very satisfied” with students' teachers range from 11 to 23 percentage points; only the parents of students with autism do not show a decline in high satisfaction.
- Students in all categories have parents whose levels of high satisfaction with teachers and home work practices have declined over time, ranging from 13 to 27 percentage points
- Declines in positive perceptions of the ability of teachers to keep good discipline in their classrooms is much less widespread and smaller in magnitude. Only students with emotional disturbances or visual or other health impairments have parents who are less likely to “strongly agree” that teachers maintain good classroom discipline, (10 to 13 percentage points).

**Exhibit 7-6**  
**Changes in Parents’ Satisfaction with Children’s Teachers, Homework Assignments, and Classroom Discipline, by Disability Category**

	Learning Disability	Speech/ Language Impairment	Mental Retardation	Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Visual Impairment	Orthopedic Impairment	Other Health Impairment	Autism	Traumatic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabilities
Percentage whose parents are “very satisfied” with:											
Children’s teachers											
Wave 1	59.2	72.2	64.3	54.5	63.2	71.7	66.2	60.4	64.3	57.7	66.7
Wave 2	40.2	50.9	45.4	35.9	52.2	56.3	47.0	37.4	51.4	43.3	49.1
Percentage-point change	-19.0***	-21.3***	-18.9***	-18.6***	-11.0**	-15.4***	-19.2***	-23.0***	-12.9***	-	-17.6***
Quantity and difficulty of homework assigned by teachers											
Wave 1	37.2	48.1	42.2	35.4	41.1	39.6	42.8	34.8	37.9	39.7	52.2
Wave 2	19.2	28.8	24.4	17.8	25.7	26.4	22.5	16.4	22.6	21.4	24.9
Percentage-point change	-18.0***	-19.3***	-17.8***	-17.6***	-15.4***	-13.2**	-20.3***	-18.4***	-15.3***	-18.3*	-27.3***
Percentage whose parents “strongly agree” that teachers maintain good discipline in the classroom											
Wave 1	38.4	44.4	38.6	36.0	44.7	48.5	46.9	42.9	42.0	31.4	46.6
Wave 2	33.5	36.7	34.4	25.7	40.4	36.7	39.3	29.8	39.4	30.6	39.4
Percentage-point change				-10.3**		-11.8*		-13.1***			

Source: SEELS parent interviews, Waves 1 and 2.

Statistically significant difference in a two-tailed test at the following levels: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

- As with other aspects of parents’ perceptions, parents of students with emotional disturbances tend to have less positive perceptions of teachers than parents of students in other categories and parents of students with hearing or visual impairments tend to have the most positive perceptions.

## Differential Changes in Parent Perceptions across Demographic Groups

Students with disabilities who differ in age, household income, and race/ethnicity have parents who have experienced changes in their perceptions of children’s schools, school programs, and teachers differently.<sup>1</sup>

### Age

Although parents’ ratings of being “very satisfied” with most aspects of their children’s education have decreased for all three age-groups, the declines are uniformly smaller among parents of the oldest students (Exhibit 7-7).

**Exhibit 7-7**  
**Parents’ Satisfaction with Students’ School, School Programs, and Teachers, by Students’ Age**

	Age in Wave 1		
	7 through 9	10 through 12	13 or 14
Percentage whose parents are “very satisfied” with:			
Children’s school			
Wave 1	57.7	50.4	44.6
Wave 2	43.1	35.5	30.7
Percentage-point change	-14.6***	-14.9***	-13.9*
Overall education program and services			
Wave 1	58.3	53.7	46.6
Wave 2	38.5	30.7	31.7
Percentage-point change	-19.8***	-23.0***	
Special education services			
Wave 1	65.9	58.1	52.4
Wave 2	51.8	41.7	46.0
Percentage-point change	-14.1***	-16.4***	
Children’s teachers			
Wave 1	71.0	60.9	51.5
Wave 2	53.4	39.4	36.7
Percentage-point change	-17.6***	-21.5***	-14.8*

Source: SEELS parent interviews, Waves 1 and 2.

Statistically significant difference in a two-tailed test at the following levels:

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

- Although on all measures, higher satisfaction was evident among parents of younger students in Wave 1, 2 years later, there no longer is a difference across categories in parents’ satisfaction with students’ programs in general and their special education services in particular.

<sup>1</sup> Because the pattern of change for items reporting parents’ agreement with various statements about schools, school programs, and teachers generally mirror changes in their satisfaction, only satisfaction items are reported in this section.

- Satisfaction continues to be higher among parents of younger students regarding their schools and teachers.

### **Household income**

The decline in high satisfaction ratings is consistent across household income with regard to children’s schools, overall school programs, and teachers (Exhibit 7-8).

- Declines in parents being “very satisfied” range from 12 to 16 percentage points regarding schools, 20 to 23 percentage points regarding students’ overall school programs and services, and 16 to 23 percentage points regarding students’ teachers.
- Parents of students in the highest income group show no decline in their high satisfaction with students’ special education services. The lowest and middle income groups show declines of 21 and 14 percentage points, respectively.
- In general, levels of high satisfaction do not differ across income groups at either wave. The exception is that parents of students in the highest income group are more likely than those in other groups to report being “very satisfied” with their children’s school.

### **Race/Ethnicity**

Decreased satisfaction is apparent among all three racial/ethnic groups (Exhibit 7-8).

- As with income differences, declines in parents being “very satisfied” are evident for all racial/ethnic groups with regard to students’ schools, overall school programs, and teachers, and the size of the declines do not differ systematically across the groups.
- Also similar to income differences, declines tend to be smaller regarding satisfaction with schools (14 and 18 percentage points) than overall school programs (20 to 23 percentage points) or teachers (18 to 24 percentage points).
- Parents of Hispanic students with disabilities do not share the reduced satisfaction with special education services evinced by parents of white and African-American students (14 and 20 percentage points, respectively).

**Exhibit 7-8**  
**Parents' Satisfaction with Students' School, School Programs, and Teachers,**  
**by Household Income and Race/Ethnicity**

	Household Income			Race/Ethnicity		
	\$25,000 and Less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	White	African American	Hispanic
Percentage whose parents are "very satisfied" with:						
Children's school						
Wave 1	47.8	51.8	58.0	55.4	41.4	55.2
Wave 2	31.4	37.6	45.9	41.4	27.9	36.9
Percentage-point change	-16.4***	-14.2***	-12.1**	-14.0***	-13.5**	-18.3**
Overall education program and services						
Wave 1	55.1	53.4	57.9	56.0	48.3	61.4
Wave 2	31.9	33.7	35.4	35.0	28.8	38.1
Percentage-point change	-23.2***	-19.7***	-22.5***	-21.0***	-19.5***	-23.3**
Special education services						
Wave 1	63.7	59.0	57.8	62.2	53.7	64.6
Wave 2	42.7	45.4	50.5	48.2	33.2	56.6
Percentage-point change	-21.0***	-13.6**		-14.0***	-20.5***	
Children's teachers						
Wave 1	63.6	63.2	65.4	65.8	58.8	62.0
Wave 2	40.5	43.1	49.2	47.1	34.5	44.3
Percentage-point change	-23.1***	-20.1***	-16.2***	-18.7***	-24.3***	-17.7**

Source: SEELS parent interviews, Waves 1 and 2.

Statistically significant difference in a two-tailed test at the following level: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

- Across the measures, parents of African-American students with disabilities are less likely to be "very satisfied" with their children's schools, school programs, and teachers than parents of white or Hispanic children.

## Summary

This chapter has examined changes in the way parents perceive their children's schools, education programs and teachers. Overall, there was a noticeable decline in parents' satisfaction with their children's school, teachers, and education programs in Wave 2. Parent report of being "very satisfied" with these aspects of their children's education decreased considerably from Wave 1 by 15 to 20 percentage points. At the same time the proportions of students with disabilities whose parents report being "somewhat to very dissatisfied" rose 6 to 10 percentage points in Wave 2. This pattern of declining parent satisfaction is consistent across all disability categories, age groups, income levels, and racial/ethnic groups.

In almost all aspects of parent perceptions highlighted in this chapter, parents of student with emotional disturbances tend to have less positive viewpoints than do parents of students in other disability categories. Parents of students with hearing or visual impairments tend to have the most positive perceptions.

### **Changes in Parent Perceptions of their Children’s Schools**

The proportions of students with disabilities whose parents report being “very satisfied” with their children’s school decreased 15 percentage points from Wave 1. At the same time, expressions of dissatisfaction with the schools rose 10 percentage points in Wave 2. There also is a 17-percentage-point decline in parents’ strong positive perceptions of how well schools inform them of their children’s behavior and academic performance. The corresponding trend towards being less satisfied includes a 7-percentage-point increase in parents reporting being “somewhat or very dissatisfied,” sending a clear message that parents want consistent information about how their children are doing in school.

The patterns of decreasing parent satisfaction with the schools students with disabilities attend and with how well schools keep parents informed about students’ behavior and academic performance are noted among students in virtually all disability categories. The decline in strong positive parent perceptions of their children’s school is greatest for students with emotional disturbances or orthopedic impairments (18 percentage points). Students with speech impairments have parents with the largest decline in expressions of high satisfaction with how well schools inform them of their children’s progress (23 percentage points).

Most students with disabilities have parents who agree that the administration at their children’s schools maintains discipline and that there is mutual respect among teachers and students, although parents are less likely to report strong agreement in Wave 2. A similar trend is evident in parents’ opinions regarding how well the school is meeting their children’s individual needs; however it is important to note that in both Waves 1 and 2 about 15% of students with disabilities have parents who do not feel their children’s needs are being met.

Declines in strong agreement that schools meet students’ individual needs is apparent across all disability categories with the largest decrease (20 percentage points) among parents of students with orthopedic impairments. Students in only three categories have parents who report lower levels of strong agreement that good discipline is maintained at school. Students with other health impairments have parents who express the largest decrease in strong agreement that there is mutual respect among teachers and students at school.

### **Changes in Parent Perceptions of their Children’s School Programs and Services**

There is a considerable decline in the proportions of students with disabilities whose parents report being “very satisfied” with their children’s education in general (21 percentage points) and special education services in particular (15

percentage points). Most of the change is offset by an increase in parents being “somewhat satisfied;” however there is an increase of 5 and 7 percentage points of parents reporting dissatisfaction with their children’s education programs and services. Although parent perceptions of school programs are generally positive, one in five students with disabilities has parents who are somewhat or very dissatisfied with their children’s special education services.

Widespread declines in strong positive perceptions of students’ general and special education programs and services are apparent for parents of students in almost all disability categories. Positive perceptions in Wave 2 are most evident for parents of students with speech, hearing, or visual impairments and least apparent among parents of students with emotional disturbances.

### **Changes in Parent Perceptions of their Children’s Teachers**

Similar patterns of decreased levels of positive perceptions from Wave 1 to Wave 2 are apparent in parents’ views of their children’s teachers and their homework practices. There is a notable decline of about 19 percentage points in parent expressions of strong satisfaction with children’s teachers, and with the amount and difficulty of homework. Although most of this decline appears in more parents reporting being satisfied but to a lesser degree (from “very” to “somewhat”), there is a 5-percentage-point increase in parents reporting dissatisfaction with their children’s teachers and homework assignments. In Wave 2, almost one-quarter of students with disabilities have parents who are “somewhat or very dissatisfied” with their children’s homework.

Despite a 6-percentage-point decline in strong positive agreement that teachers maintain order in their classrooms, a large majority of students with disabilities have parents who are at least somewhat satisfied with teachers and in general agreement that they maintain good discipline in the classroom.

Students in all disability categories have parents whose levels of high satisfaction with teachers and their homework practices have declined over time. Only students with emotional disturbances or visual or other health impairments have parents who are less likely to express strong agreement that teachers maintain good classroom discipline.

### **Differential Changes in Parent Perceptions across Demographic Groups**

Students with disabilities who differ in age, household income, and race/ethnicity have parents who have expressed changes in their perceptions of their children’s schools, education programs, and teachers. There is a decrease in high levels of parent satisfaction with most aspects of their children’s schools for all three age groups (7 through 9, 10 through 12, and 13 or 14); however the declines are uniformly smaller among parents of the oldest students. The decline in high satisfaction ratings is consistent across household income and racial/ethnic groups in regard to children’s school, overall school programs, and teachers. Students in the highest income group and Hispanic students have parents who do not share the reduced satisfaction with their children’s special education services

expressed by parents of students in the lowest or middle income groups, or parents of white and African American students.

### **Conclusion**

It is apparent that there is a growing discontent among parents of students with disabilities in regard to their schools their children attend, the education programs and special education services their children receive, and their children's teachers. In most cases, parents of students in all disability categories, age groups, household incomes, and racial/ethnic groups consistently express decreasing satisfaction with these aspects of their children's education. It is important to explore whether these declines in positive parent perceptions continue to decrease as children with disabilities transition into high school; and if they do, why.